

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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In the Matter of: *
 *
DCA-03-MM-035 *
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Thursday,
August 21, 2003

INTERVIEW OF:

LIEUTENANT JG MATT BOTNEN

PRESENT:

ROBERT FORD
ROB JONES
WILLIAM WOODY

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 MR. FORD: Okay. Hello.

3 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: Hello.

4 MR. FORD: How are you doing?

5 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: I am doing all right.

6 MR. FORD: Just for the record if you could
7 just identify your name?

8 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: Lieutenant Junior Grade
9 Robert Matthew Botnen.

10 MR. FORD: Okay. And we might as well start
11 with the easy ones, first.

12 How long have you been in the Coast Guard?

13 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: I have been in the Coast
14 Guard two years.

15 MR. FORD: Two years. And your aviation
16 experience?

17 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: I flew in the Army for,
18 what, 12 years before that, so 14 years flying
19 experience.

20 MR. FORD: You are the third guy that I have
21 talked to, are you guys, you keep taking them from
22 the Army, huh?

23 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: Yes.

24 MR. FORD: Okay. Why don't you just tell us
25 what happened and what you saw that day, June 14?

1 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: Okay. I was on the
2 second bird, obviously, the 6008. I was oncoming
3 that morning, so when I arrived at work at 7:30 the
4 case, I guess, was already, they had just been
5 launched with the first bird. So they told us to go
6 ahead and run right out to the aircraft to launch.
7 When we got out to the bird, they told us to stand
8 by because the -- County Dive team was in route to
9 us, because at this point, I guess, Taki too had was
10 still capsized and they didn't know if they could
11 utilize the dive team to try to ascertain whether or
12 not there were survivors inside the hull. So, we
13 held for the dive team, and for probably about 20
14 minutes. Just as the dive team was walking out to
15 the aircraft, I guess, the Taki Too was, had righted
16 itself in the surf line and so we no longer needed
17 them. And so, we departed at that point. And
18 arrived on scene probably about 20 minutes later, or
19 no, probably closer to 15 minutes later.

20 Once we were on scene, just started a
21 parallel search, search of the parallel of the surf
22 line and just basically between the north jetty and
23 out to an area called Twin Rocks, which is about a
24 mile and a half north and just started a search
25 there. At that point, I don't know we searched for

1 probably about a half hour or so, when the second
2 person that the 05 picked up was found and they
3 picked them up while we stood cover. And then when
4 they went back, we continued our searching. We flew
5 for 7.3 that day. And just, you know, searched
6 either parallel to shore line or then we would go
7 perpendicular to shore line and then back parallel
8 to shore line and just kept that up pretty much for
9 most of the day.

10 MR. FORD: That was 7.3 hours, right?

11 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: Yes.

12 MR. FORD: Okay. You never recovered
13 anybody?

14 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: No, we did not.

15 MR. FORD: Okay. Did you see a lot of
16 debris in the water?

17 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: Yes, there was quite a
18 bit of debris. There was, the main section of
19 debris, which was pretty much against the north side
20 of the North Jetty, probably about 50 feet or so off
21 the, off the beach. And then there was sporadic
22 other sets of, of debris including like a coat from
23 one of the passengers, I would assume, and a few
24 other things off the boat. For the majority of the
25 search, like I said, we were out there for at least

1 on scene for a good six hours and the debris,
2 itself, didn't move all that much throughout the
3 time. We kept coming across the same stuff over and
4 over again in the same positions. And there was
5 also a life raft that was over by the North Jetty,
6 and, and you know, some pieces, some other debris
7 just, occasionally we would come across life jackets
8 and things like that.

9 MR. FORD: And your whole groups got
10 together afterwards, obviously, and talked out what
11 you saw, correct?

12 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: Yes.

13 MR. FORD: And there was nothing that
14 really, anyone saw that they felt was unusual for
15 the area or they said, I saw this and I couldn't
16 understand that? One of the reasons I am asking
17 that is because everything, everyone, including the
18 boat, washed in pretty much north of the jetty, and
19 yet two bodies were never recovered. And it is just
20 kind of curious to me as to why the two bodies, two
21 remaining bodies never did wash to the beach.

22 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: I, I can't really
23 speculate on why those two didn't wash onto the
24 beach. I, yeah, I can't even really try.

25 MR. FORD: Right, right, okay.

1 Rob or Bill?

2 MR. WOODY: Bill Woody here. I am just
3 curious about the debris. Did you see any logs out
4 there?

5 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: Yes, we did see, there
6 were a couple logs that were just parallel to the
7 north jetty, just to the north side, kind of in the
8 same area of the major debris field, kind of caught
9 in the same swirl area that are north of the jetty.
10 There weren't that many, I can't remember if it was
11 maybe just even two.

12 MR. WOODY: How far north of the jetty might
13 this have been?

14 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: I would say probably 15,
15 10 to 20 feet north of the jetty.

16 MR. WOODY: And from the beach?

17 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: I would say out maybe 50
18 to 100 feet.

19 MR. WOODY: Okay. We would told that the
20 boats when they cleared the jetty that day, they
21 took west northwest or a northwest westerly course,
22 did you see any logs along those kind of tracks?

23 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: No, sir, I didn't see
24 any logs or any other such debris outside the surf
25 line.

1 MR. WOODY: Okay.

2 MR. JONES: Lieutenant Botnen.

3 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: Yes.

4 MR. JONES: Hi, this is Rob Jones.

5 Just, if you could take us through just
6 from your, from the stop position really. You were
7 at your base and the SAR went off. Were you guys,
8 was your group turn two at that time or --

9 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: My group was arriving to
10 relieve the other group for the morning when I guess
11 they got launched. So, we were, I wasn't even on
12 the scene yet. When I drove up in my car, the other
13 bird was already off the ground. And as I was
14 getting out of my car, that is when, almost like out
15 the window, they were yelling, hey, there is a case
16 going on, run right in and get your, and get suited
17 up.

18 MR. JONES: Okay.

19 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: And so that is pretty
20 much the case for all my crew. We arrived as the
21 scene was unfolding at the very, very early stages.

22 MR. JONES: Okay. And you said you were
23 waiting for the dive team but did you take off with
24 them or no?

25 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: No, we did not.

1 MR. JONES: Okay.

2 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: We got the word that
3 the, I guess, the Taki Too had righted itself in the
4 surf.

5 MR. JONES: Right.

6 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: And, yeah, just right at
7 that moment, and so they were like walking out to
8 the bird, but we turned them back and that is when
9 we took off.

10 MR. JONES: And your team carried that day
11 with you, your pilot, yourself as the pilot?

12 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: Yes, and then I had
13 Lieutenant Matt Gingrich as the co-pilot, my rescue
14 swimmer was Chief Smiley and my flight mechanic -- I
15 can't remember who my flight mechanic was.

16 MR. JONES: Okay.

17 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: I had a flight man come
18 aboard as well.

19 MR. JONES: And that is the standard number
20 of personnel aboard for --

21 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: Yes, both birds had four
22 personnel onboard.

23 MR. JONES: Okay.

24 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: Yes, and Jimmy Johnson
25 was my flight mac. He is a, he was a second class

1 AMT.

2 MR. JONES: Okay. And also the same question
3 I asked the other lieutenant, was you are on scene
4 for, you said about, approximately 7.3 hours, what
5 determines your release from the scene?

6 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: Well, it pretty much
7 deals with our, our crew rest time. We are, at the
8 point where I was over six hours, as soon as we land
9 with over six hours, then that is it for us. And
10 then another crew would have to come out. I had
11 reached a bingo fuel status. I was, I had to go
12 back or I would run out gas. And so when I landed
13 with that last bingo fuel, we had over six hours on
14 us. And so that was the end of our day.

15 MR. JONES: And while you are on site, you
16 relay that information to your group SAR.

17 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: Yes, we constantly keep
18 them abreast of our fuel status and the probable
19 ending of our time on scene.

20 MR. JONES: And was that, let's see if you
21 launched soon after, so seven hours, so it is
22 somewhere around 1500 or so that day?

23 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: I think it was actually
24 a little bit later than that, about 1600 or so,
25 because we did, we were off scene in the middle of

1 the day for about, about an hour, because we ran out
2 of gas earlier, too, and we went to the airport
3 there at Tillamook and refueled there and then went
4 back out.

5 MR. JONES: Okay. And just, just to follow
6 this up, there were no other birds relieved you,
7 that was it, after you left that was it for the
8 helicopters?

9 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: Yes, that was it for
10 that night, I believe.

11 MR. JONES: Okay.

12 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: I am trying to remember
13 if maybe they didn't launch another first flight the
14 following morning, just to see, but, I, I can't
15 remember.

16 MR. JONES: Okay. We can check into that
17 with Portland or --

18 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: Yes.

19 MR. JONES: -- or right there in Garibaldi.
20 Okay. I think that is all I have,
21 Lieutenant. Thanks.

22 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: Okay.

23 MR. WOODY: Just one quick question. Are
24 there any, Bill Woody here. Are there any, any
25 after action memos or logs or summations of your

1 search that day that we could get?

2 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: Yes, there is kind of,
3 something like that our group duty officer puts
4 together that kind of summarizes the case. And I
5 will talk to Lieutenant Seward and when he is
6 getting that other stuff together to send you, I
7 will make sure that he includes a copy of that.

8 MR. WOODY: Okay. Because I understand time,
9 we have received a time from you as we talk, but you
10 were getting to work around 7:30. You were told to
11 go right to your aircraft. About what time did you
12 get to the aircraft? What time did you get --

13 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: I would think about
14 seven, probably 7:50 or so. We were probably at the
15 aircraft and then again standing by for the divers.
16 I don't think we probably made it off the ground
17 until about 8:15 or so.

18 MR. WOODY: And these times would be in the
19 material that you could probably get for us.

20 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: Yes, they would be.

21 MR. WOODY: Okay. Fine.

22 MR. FORD: Well, that is pretty good from
23 this end.

24 MR. WOODY: Right.

25 MR. FORD: We really appreciate your time.

1 I hope we didn't pull you away from anything
2 pressing.

3 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: No, nothing at all.

4 MR. FORD: Okay. Thanks again.

5 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: Okay. Thank you.

6 MR. WOODY: Thank you.

7 MR. FORD: Bye.

8 LIEUTENANT BOTNEN: Bye.

9 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)